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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**CHANGES IN LATITUDES, CHANGES IN ATTITUDES:
NARRATING A REGIME CHANGE**

by

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March 2015

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**CHANGES IN LATITUDES, CHANGES IN ATTITUDES: NARRATING A
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MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Throughout its history, the United States has demonstrated an ability to effect regime change through the use of special warfare, particularly clandestine and covert operations. However, these regime changes have failed to yield favorable, enduring strategic results for the United States. One reason for this failure can be attributed to the difficulty formulating a strategic narrative designed to elicit domestic and international support. Drawing from the tenets of social movement theory, this thesis examines the cases of the Iran Coup of 1953, the Guatemalan Coup of 1954, and the Nicaragua Revolution of 1978–1990 to analyze the impacts of operations aimed at shaping the perceptions of foreign target audiences in support of special warfare objectives. Furthermore, this thesis offers recommendations regarding the requisite means and organizational forms required to create strategic narratives that support influence operations in cases of regime change and other special warfare operations.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AOIC	Anglo-Iranian Oil Company
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DOD	Department of Defense
FSLN	Sandinista National Liberation Front
InterArmco	International Armament Company
IO	information operations
MISO	Military Information Support Operations
NSDD	National Security Decision Directive
OSS	Office of Strategic Service
PSYOP	Psychological Operations
SAVAK	Sāzemān-e Ettelā'āt va Amniyat-e Keshvar
SIS	Secret Intelligence Service
SMT	social movement theory
SOF	Special Operations Forces
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. UNDERSTANDING SPECIAL WARFARE

If there is anything that United States has learned from its recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is this: the opposition is choosing to engage the United States with unconventional methods of war and the United States has too often been unprepared to fight back unconventionally. According to John R. Schindler, a professor of national security affairs at the Naval War College, “We can expect a gradual move away from the high-intensity warfare that the United States has perfected in the tactical-operational realm.”¹ He reasons that, with the noted possible exception of China, the rest of the world “appears uninterested in fighting the United States the way the United States likes to fight.”² As a result of the changing and adaptive tactics and strategy of the opposition, and problematic recent results, the United States is now emphasizing the use of special warfare.

Special warfare is defined as “the execution of activities that involve a combination of lethal and nonlethal actions taken by a specially trained and educated force that has a deep understanding of cultures and foreign languages, proficiency in small-unit tactics, and the ability to build and fight alongside indigenous combat formations in a permissive, uncertain, or hostile environment.”³ Special warfare encapsulates the full spectrum of special operations, including unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, and counterinsurgency.⁴ As such, one can deduce that special warfare requires deep interaction with the population of an operating environment; and special warfare can allow military forces to conduct operations outside the normal scope

¹ Michael P. Noonan, “Can the U.S. Fight the Wars of the Future?” *U.S. News & World Report*, September 20, 2013, <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/world-report/2013/09/20/the-us-defense-budget-and-the-growing-popularity-of-special-war>.

² *Ibid.*

³ U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Publication (JP) 3-05: Special Operations* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2011), 9.

⁴ *Ibid.*

of traditional military activities, such as shaping perceptions of a population so as to obtain their support for regime change.

B. CONTROLLING THE POPULATION

If the population is the center of gravity in a special warfare environment, then controlling the population is paramount. For example, in “Special Forces and the Art of Influence: A Grassroots Approach to Psychological Operations in an Unconventional Warfare Environment,” Joel W. Thomas II claims the ability to control the population is the critical factor for success in unconventional warfare, which is a subset of special warfare.⁵ The reason is that the faction that controls the population often does it on the basis of an information advantage.⁶ This information advantage allows the controlling faction to dictate the terms of special warfare to its benefit.

In “Influence Operations: Redefining the Indirect Approach,” authors Edward M. Lopacienski, William M. Grieshaber, Bradley M. Carr, and Carson S. Hoke argue that influence operations are vital in controlling the population in an unconventional warfare operating environment.⁷ These men advocate that decisive influence operations are predicated on the following concepts: messages and deeds, channels, and mediums. Messages and deeds must resonate with the population to be credible; channels are the people who can facilitate the dissemination of information broadly and quickly within the population; and mediums are the means used by the channels to express the message.⁸

Although these concepts are the core of decisive influence operations, the messages and deeds concept is the most important. The reason is that messages provide the ideas for a population to rally behind, and deeds are the actions that support and reinforce those messages. In “The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block

⁵ Joel W. Thomas II, “Special Forces and the Art of Influence: A Grassroots Approach to Psychological Operations in an Unconventional Warfare Environment” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2006), 2.

⁶ Point taken from discussion in Professor Gordon McCormick’s Seminar in Guerilla Warfare, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 2012.

⁷ Edward M. Lopacienski et al., “Influence Operations: Redefining the Indirect Approach” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2011), 1–2, 15–18.

⁸ Ibid., 15–18.

War,” Gen. Charles C. Krulak argues there is a three-block war concept: hand out humanitarian supplies; separate warring factions; and fight adversaries.⁹ In “Future Warfare and the Rise of Hybrid Wars,” LtGen. James N. Mattis and LtCol. (Retired) Frank G. Hoffman of the United States Marine Corps build upon Gen Krulak’s three-block concept by recognizing an additional dimension in which information operations are used to gain popular support and consent.¹⁰

According to Mattis and Hoffman,

Our actions in the three other blocks are important to building our credibility and establishing relationships with the population and their leadership. Thus, there is an information operations aspect within each block ... The information operations component is how we extend our reach and how we can influence populations to reject the misshaped ideology and hatred they are offered by the insurgents.¹¹

Thus, it can be argued that the key to shaping perceptions within a special warfare environment is to have a message with supporting actions.

C. MASTER NARRATIVES

While the key to controlling the population is through influence operations, one first needs to unify the population so they can be controlled. The tool to unify the population is through a master narrative.

Master narratives create the reason to join or support a cause or to leave one cause for another, often becoming the rallying cry for a social movement. Master narratives are “historically grounded stories that reflect a community’s identity and experiences, or explain its hopes, aspirations, and concerns.”¹² Master narratives provide a unifying

⁹ Charles C. Krulak, “The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War,” *Marines Magazine* 28, no. 1 (1999): 26–33.

¹⁰ James N. Mattis and Frank G. Hoffman, “Future Warfare and the Rise of Hybrid Wars,” *Proceedings* 132, no. 11 (2005): 18–19.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Open Source Center and Monitor 360, *Master Narratives Country Report: Syria* (Reston, VA: Open Source Center, 2012), 6.

sense of community and can be the difference between the success and failure of a social movement.¹³ Given this assertion, constructing a proper master narrative is critical.

Framing is another critical factor that must be taken into consideration. Framing theory posits that a perspective inside a message can influence the response of an individual.¹⁴ It is argued that the success of a mobilization, within and across movements, is dependent upon how one frames the mobilization.¹⁵ For example, the al-Qaeda movement can be viewed as unsuccessful with nonviolent Islamic fundamentalists because al-Qaeda has had difficulties framing the permissible use of violence.¹⁶ Framing the argument for a master narrative is dependent on three devices: diagnostic (identifying a problem and attributing blame or causality); prognostic (suggesting solutions to a problem and identifying strategies, tactics, and targets); and motivational (elaborating a call to arms or rationale for action).¹⁷

D. INITIATE AND/OR SUSTAIN MOVEMENTS

For a message to have any effective influence, it must be supplemented by action.¹⁸ There are two types of action that can mobilize a population. The first catalyst is violent action. The catalyst for the Arab Spring is an example of violent action.¹⁹ When Mohammed Bouazizi committed an act of self-immolation, he launched a revolutionary social movement that led to the downfall of four dictators, one civil war, and a multitude of government changes throughout northern Africa and the Middle East. The second catalyst is nonviolent action. An example of nonviolent action would be the

¹³ Open Source Center and Monitor 360, *Country Report: Syria*, 6.

¹⁴ Robin L. Nabi, "Exploring the Framing Effects of Emotion: Do Discrete Emotions Differentially Influence Information Accessibility, Information Seeking, and Policy Preference?" *Communication Research* 30, no. 2 (2003), 225.

¹⁵ David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, "Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization," *International Social Movement Research* 1, no. 1 (1988), 199.

¹⁶ Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Framing Jihad: Intramovement Framing Contests and al-Qaeda's Struggle for Sacred Authority," *International Review of Social History* 49 (2004), 159.

¹⁷ Snow and Benford, "Ideology," 200–202.

¹⁸ Lopacienski et al., "Influence Operations," 16.

¹⁹ Kareem Fahim, "Slap to a Man's Pride Set Off Tumult in Tunisia," *New York Times*, January 21, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/22/world/africa/22sidi.html?pagewanted=1&_r=2&src=twrhp&.

endeavors of M.K. Gandhi. Beginning with the Salt March, Gandhi led and sustained a social movement through the application of nonviolent civil resistance that ended with India and Great Britain becoming equals.²⁰

E. SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY

In special warfare, controlling the population is the definitive factor for success. The key to controlling the population is influence operations, with the foundation for control being the ability to craft a master narrative to unite the movement and followed by the supporting actions to sustain the movement. However, such a movement requires an ability to transcend individual grievances yet harness the power of individuals to form a singular entity. The key to this dilemma may lie within the theoretical framework of social movement theory (SMT).

In *Understanding and Influencing Public Support for Insurgency and Terrorism*, SMT is defined as “an interdisciplinary field of research that concerns itself with describing and explaining the dynamics of movements—including social movements.”²¹ A social movement is defined as “collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interactions with elites, opponents and authorities.”²² At the heart of SMT is the belief that social movements are used to generate public support for an idea. Furthermore, it is argued that public support is dependent on four factors: motivation for supporting a group or cause; perceived legitimacy of methods; acceptability of costs and risks; and availability of a mobilizing mechanism.²³ Understanding how resistance groups garner public support requires an understanding of how groups frame their images and ideologies.²⁴ SMT provides that understanding.

²⁰ Gene Sharp, “Introduction to Part One,” in *The Politics of Nonviolent Action—Part One: Power and Struggle*, ed. Marina Finkelstein (Manchester, NH: Porter Sargent and Extending Horizon Books, 2012), 5.

²¹ Paul K. Davis et al., *Understanding and Influencing Public Support for Insurgency and Terrorism* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2012), 16.

²² Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 4.

²³ Davis et al., *Understanding and Influencing*, 15.

²⁴ David A. Snow et al., “Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation,” *American Sociological Review* 51, no. 4 (1986), 464.

The RAND publication lists six elements that aid in the understanding of mobilization of public support.²⁵ The first element, leadership, requires the development of strategies to promote the goals and objectives of the group based on changing environmental circumstances.²⁶ The second element, ideological packaging, creates the narrative for the group.²⁷ The third element, frames and framing, creates group identities and exploits grievances.²⁸ The fourth element, resource mobilization, seeks to expand and control resources to exploit or develop social networks and other structures to further the cause.²⁹ The fifth element, opportunism and adaptation, relates a group's strategy to the realities outside of the movement.³⁰ The sixth and final element, presence, tactics and deeds, describes the necessary conduct for actions that reinforce the message.³¹ These six elements will provide the foundation for understanding how to mobilize the population against the regime in power in special warfare.

F. REGIME CHANGE

The United States' attempts at regime change often do not turn out as favorably as intended. In *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq*, Stephen Kinzer states, "When the United States assumes the right to decide which regimes pose urgent threats, and then acts violently to crush them, it destabilizes the world rather than stabilizes it."³² The United States tends to use regime change as "a substitute for thoughtful foreign policy."³³ Due to the United States' inability to create an effective master narrative, and actions to support it, the United States often finds itself in a political quagmire.

²⁵ Davis, et al, *Understanding and Influencing*, 17–22.

²⁶ Ibid., 17–19.

²⁷ Ibid., 19.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 20.

³⁰ Ibid., 21.

³¹ Ibid., 21–22.

³² Stephen Kinzer, *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq* (New York: Times Books, Henry Holt, 2006), 320.

³³ Ibid.

G. RESEARCH QUESTION AND THESIS DESIGN

This thesis asks the following research question: How can the U.S. military shape perceptions of foreign target audiences to support special warfare objectives?

1. Hypotheses

- H1: The ideology behind the anti-regime must be broadly accepted and perceived as legitimate.
- H2: The ability to control perception is dependent on the ability to leverage existing grievances and exploit regime vulnerabilities.
- H3: Information-shaping operations should precede major combat operations against the regime.
- H4: Information operations (IO) should target respected host nation communicators who are willing and capable of the disseminating the themes.
- H5: The legitimacy of the enemy's narrative must be undermined.

2. Case Studies

To answer the research question and test the hypotheses, this thesis will examine the following case studies in Chapters II–IV:

- The Iran Coup of 1953.
- The Guatemala Coup of 1954.
- The Nicaragua Revolution, 1978–1990.

These case studies were chosen because they highlight the successes and failures of the United States' ability to influence the local population to support a regime change through the use of messaging and supporting actions.

Each case study will be examined in the following manner:

- A Brief Synopsis.
- Target Nation Perceptions prior to Attempted Regime Change.
- Target Nation Perceptions after Attempted Regime Change.
- Application of the Elements of Social Movement Theory.
- Testing of the Hypotheses.

The final chapter, Chapter V, concludes with a summary of the research findings, recommendations for applying the research, and suggestions for further study.

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II. IRAN

A. SYNOPSIS

The primary motivation behind the Iranian Coup d'Etat of 1953 was arguably ensuring access to oil. The Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) had an arrangement with Iran that gave the conglomerate control over all oil operations in southern Iran.³⁴ According to the arrangement, AIOC paid rent, taxes and salaries of Iranian employees.³⁵ Though this money constituted half of Iran's gross national product, AOIC paid more to the British government and the AOIC earned ten times the amount it paid Iran.³⁶ As early as 1947, and prior to his ascension to prime minister, Mohammad Mossadeq rejected an oil deal with the Soviets and sought a more favorable deal for Iran with the AIOC.³⁷ In fact, Mossadeq and the Majlis, the parliament of Iran, wanted a deal similar to what the United States had with Saudi Arabia.³⁸ The British refused and Iran made a move to nationalize Iranian oil.³⁹ On April 30, 1951, Mossadeq became the Prime Minister of Iran. On May 1, 1951, Mossadeq officially nationalized Iranian oil.⁴⁰

No longer viewing Iran as a willing partner with Mossadeq at the helm, the British led a Western-power-backed boycott of Iranian oil. This boycott had a crippling effect on the Iranian economy. Furthermore, the British approached the United States with a plan to overthrow Mossadeq. President Truman thought it unwise to overthrow Mossadeq, favoring diplomacy to resolve the matter between the AIOC and Iran.⁴¹ When Eisenhower came into office, he attempted to avoid issues involving the conflict between the British and the Iranians. When he did intervene, he often sided with the

³⁴ John Prados, *Presidents' Secret Wars: CIA and Pentagon Covert Operations from World War II through the Persian Gulf War* (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1996), 92.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Amin Saikal, *The Rise and Fall of the Shah* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 38.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 39.

⁴¹ Prados, *Presidents' Secret Wars*, 93.

British. As internal strife within the Iranian government grew due to a failing economy, Mossadeq reached out to Eisenhower seeking financial aid. However, Eisenhower refused to provide assistance. Instead, he authorized Operation Ajax.

Operation Ajax was the Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) and the Secret Intelligence Service's (SIS) covert operation to overthrow Mossadeq. The operation primarily "focused on getting the Iranian army to back the Shah against Mossadeq," through the use of an extensive psychological warfare campaign designed to discredit the legitimacy of Mossadeq.⁴² The desired end-state of Operation Ajax was to reestablish the power of the Shah, resolve the oil crisis with the British, and create a fiscally responsible and anti-communist government.⁴³

There were two coup attempts during Operation Ajax. The first attempt did not go well. Nemotallah Nasiri, the commander of the Imperial Guard, attempted to arrest Mossadeq after the decree from the Shah sometime during August 14–15. However, Mossadeq had learned of the coup and had Nasiri arrested.⁴⁴ On August 16, pro-Mossadeq forces took control of the city and Radio Tehran announced the coup had been stopped.⁴⁵

Although the outcome looked bleak, and the CIA was ready to give up, the second attempt succeeded. Why did the second attempt succeed? Kermit Roosevelt, the CIA officer in charge of the coup, and General Zahedi were not ready to give in to the dire situation. They met on the morning of August 16 to discuss a course of action. The conspirators decided to publicize the Shah's decrees.⁴⁶ Kermit Roosevelt had the CIA contact the Associated Press to announce the Shah's actions, which were eventually

⁴² Prados, *Presidents' Secret Wars*, 95.

⁴³ Donald N. Wilber, *Regime Change in Iran: Overthrow of Premier Mossadeq of Iran, November 1952–August 1953* (Nottingham, England: Spokesman, 2006), 13.

⁴⁴ Mark J. Gasiorowski, "The 1953 Coup d'État Against Mosaddeq," in *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran*, ed. Mark J. Gasiorowski and Malcolm Byrne (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 249.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 251.

broadcast by Iranian media.⁴⁷ Attempting to drum up support for Zahedi, U.S military advisors provided aid, such as medical supplies and military gear, to Iranian military forces.⁴⁸ The CIA also financed a protesting mob under the guise of Tudeh supporters, which caused actual Tudeh members to join the demonstration.⁴⁹ Military personnel and civilians would clash over the next couple of days, culminating with the destruction of Mossadeq's house on August 19. On August 20, Mossadeq surrendered to General Zahedi.

B. IRANIAN PERCEPTION OF THE UNITED STATES PRIOR TO COUP

Throughout the 1940s, the Iranian public largely embraced American culture. American music and movies became commonplace, with many Hollywood stars becoming household names.⁵⁰ Voice of America programs in Iran were very popular, particularly trivia and call-in talk shows.⁵¹ As the Iranian public's love affair with American culture progressed, so did the Iranian government's support of the American government and its policies.

A key example of the Iranian government's favorable perception of the United States occurred during the Iran-Azerbaijan Crisis of 1946. The Soviets sponsored two autonomous republics within Iran—the Azerbaijan People's Republic and the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad. Furthermore, the Soviets also had forces remaining in Iran after the expiration of the Tripartite Agreement.⁵² Seeking the removal of Soviet forces from the areas, Tehran turned to Washington for assistance. Exerting political pressure through diplomatic means at the U.N., the United States contributed to the removal of Soviet

⁴⁷ Gasiorowski, "1953 Coup d'État," 251.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 252.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 252–253.

⁵⁰ Adam Cooper, "American Foreign Policy Iran: Development, Strategy, and the Rise of Anti-Americanism," *Libertas*, n.d., <http://www.libertas.bham.ac.uk/publications/articles/American%20Foreign%20Policy%20in%20Iran.pdf>.

⁵¹ Deborah Kisatsky, "Voice of America and Iran, 1949–1953: US Liberal Developmentalism, Propaganda and the Cold War," *Intelligence and National Security* 14, no. 3 (1999), 165.

⁵² Mansour Bonakdarian, "U.S.–Iranian Relations, 1911–1951," Iran Chamber Society, n.d. http://www.iranchamber.com/history/articles/pdfs/us_ir_1911_1951.pdf.

forces from Iran.⁵³ After the Soviets departed, the United States, under President Truman, returned to a distant, hands-off foreign policy approach towards Iran, a move that the Iranian public appreciated.⁵⁴ Though the Iran-Azerbaijan Crisis of 1946 provides a positive glimpse of the United States through the Iranian eyes, the best perspective is through the actions of Mosaddeq himself.

While his relationship deteriorated with the United States shortly before the coup, Mohammad Mosaddeq initially had a favorable view and attitude toward America.⁵⁵ Mosaddeq often relied upon the United States to serve as a mediating entity between Iran and Great Britain over Iran's endeavors to nationalize its oil production.⁵⁶ Indicative of his favorable stance toward the United States, Mosaddeq constantly sought military aid from the United States, though often to his own detriment.⁵⁷

Based on the actions of the Iranian people and Mossadeq, it can be determined that the perception of the Iranian people and the Iranian government were generally positive toward the United States. It is evident that the Iranian people held the United States in high regards via their acceptance of and affection for American culture. As for the Iranian government, it all started and ended with Mossadeq. Initially, he held a highly favorable perception of the United States. However, it waned as the United States started to side with the British instead of the Iranians on the nationalization of oil. Furthermore, Mossadeq's threat to seek Soviet aid did not sit well with the United States. That stance solidified U.S. support toward the British.

⁵³ Saikal, *Rise and Fall*, 32–34.

⁵⁴ Malcolm Byrne, "Road to Intervention: Factors Influencing U.S. Policy Toward Iran, 1945–1953," in *Mohammad Mossaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran*, ed. Mark J. Gasiorowski and Malcolm Byrne (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 207–208.

⁵⁵ Stephen Kinzer, "Inside Iran's Fury," *Smithsonian Magazine*, October 2008, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/people-places/iran-fury.html>.

⁵⁶ Cooper, "American Foreign Policy."

⁵⁷ Jonathan Moore, "Meddling in the Middle East: The Beginning of the End of U.S.-Iran Foreign Relations," *Undergraduate Review* 5, no. 1, article 6 (1992), 21.

C. IRANIAN PERCEPTION OF THE UNITED STATES AFTER THE COUP

As the new benefactors of the regime change, the Shah and Zahedi were indebted to the United States. Within three weeks of the Shah and Zahedi assuming power in Iran, the United States immediately gave Iran \$68 million dollars in emergency aid.⁵⁸ Over the next decade, the United States would give Iran \$1.2 billion in aid. Furthermore, the CIA would assist the Shah and Zahedi in other covert endeavors, such as slightly rigging the parliamentary elections of 1954 and putting down several uprisings.⁵⁹

As for the Iranian people's perceptions of the United States, the initial response was favorable as well. The Iranians saw that the Americans were assisting with the rebuilding of the Iranian economy and government. However, over the next two decades, that favorable perception would begin to wane as the United States continued to support an increasingly dictatorial ruler. "The Shah's regime moved swiftly to suppress all opposition, imposed strict censorship on mass media, and banned all forms of political organization, activities, and even literary expression that it found threatening to its security."⁶⁰ The brutality of the Sāzemān-e Ettelā'āt va Amniyat-e Keshvar (SAVAK) soured many Iranians against the Shah. Many of the people that SAVAK detained were often tortured, which made his people hate him.⁶¹ Lastly, in 1964, Iran passed a status of forces agreement with the United States. Though it appeared to the United States as a typical operating standard, it appeared to Iranians that the government had once again given away sovereignty to an imperial power.⁶² Giving Iran a \$200 million loan immediately after the signing of the status of forces agreement did not help matters either.⁶³ Over the next thirty years, the Iranian people would come to despise Americans, culminating with the seizing of the U.S. Embassy in 1979.

⁵⁸ Gasiorowski, "1953 Coup d'État," 257.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Saikal, *Rise and Fall*, 62.

⁶¹ William R. Polk, *Understanding Iran: Everything You Need to Know, from Persia to the Islamic Republic, from Cyrus to Ahmadinejad* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 115.

⁶² Ibid., 116.

⁶³ Ibid.

After the coup, the Iranian perception of the United States was not something the United States had anticipated. Initially, both the Iranian people and government were pleased with the outcome of the coup. The Iranian people, however, grew displeased with the United States. Although the United States increased its financial and military support to Iran, it turned a blind eye to the Shah's harsh ruling methods. Iranians began to notice that the United States was not on the side of the people. In the eyes of the Iranians, the United States had become another imperialist power violating the sovereignty of Iran.

D. APPLICATION OF SMT TO THE COUP D'ETAT OF 1953

1. Leadership

Donald Wilber, a former agent of the Office of Strategic Service (OSS) and the CIA agent responsible for the psychological campaign in Operation Ajax, said the following:

By the end of 1952, it had become clear that the Mossadeq government in Iran was incapable of reaching an oil settlement with interested Western countries; was reaching dangerous and advanced state of illegal, deficit financing; was disregarding the Iranian constitution in prolonging Premier Mohammad Mossadeq's tenure of office; was motivated mainly by Mossadeq's desire for personal power; was governed by irresponsible policies based on emotion; had weakened the Shah and the Iranian Army to a dangerous degree; and had cooperated closely with the Tudeh (Communist) Party of Iran.⁶⁴

Essentially, the unstable conditions of the political environment of Iran had led United States officials and policy makers to perceive a Mossadeq government in Iran as one not in the best interests of the United States, nor Western powers, particularly the United Kingdom. As a result, the United States decided to act. However, the United States was unsure of how to proceed. The answer would come in the form of a CIA estimate.

On April 16, 1953, the CIA completed an estimate entitled, "Factors Involved in the Overthrow of Mossadeq." The study concluded that "a Shah-General Zahedi combination, supported by CIA local assets and financial backing, would have a good chance of overthrowing Mossadeq, particularly if this combination should be able to get

⁶⁴ Wilber, *Regime Change*, 13.

the largest mobs in the streets and if a sizeable portion of the Tehran garrison refused to carry out Mossadeq's orders."⁶⁵ As a result of the study's findings, the CIA determined that a joint venture between the British SIS and American CIA, with the Shah and General Zahedi as the public face of the regime change in Iran, would be the best course of action.

Though the Shah and Zahedi were identified as the public leaders of the coup, the true leaders were the ones who developed and oversaw the execution of the strategy. The true leaders of the coup were Kermit Roosevelt, Donald Wilber, Norman Darbyshire, and George Carroll. Kermit Roosevelt, the grandson of President Theodore Roosevelt, former OSS agent, and current CIA Chief of the Near East and Africa Division, was given the overall responsibility for the planning and execution of the coup.⁶⁶ Donald Wilber, a consultant to the CIA who specialized in psychological warfare and a former OSS agent, was given the responsibility of leading the psychological warfare campaign of the coup.⁶⁷ Norman Darbyshire, the British SIS counterpart of Donald Wilber, brought the main SIS political action operation in Iran, the Rashidian Network, whose task was the destabilization of Iran, into the fold.⁶⁸ Last, George Carroll, a CIA paramilitary expert, would develop the military aspect of Operation Ajax. Together, these four men would develop and oversee the coup.

Operation Ajax consisted of six steps.⁶⁹ First, destabilize the Mossadeq government with propaganda. Second, have Zahedi organize the military side of the coup. Third, secure the Shah's cooperation. Fourth, use the Rashidian brothers and Iranian British intelligence agents, to buy support from Iran's parliament and cause internal strife. Fifth, organize a massive demonstration to denounce Mossadeq and trigger

⁶⁵ National Security Archive, "The Secret CIA History of the Iran Coup, 1953," November 29, 2000, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB28/>.

⁶⁶ Christopher de Bellaigue, *The Patriot of Persia: Muhammad Mossadegh and a Tragic Anglo-American Coup* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), 225.

⁶⁷ Gasiorowski, "1953 Coup d'État," 233–234.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 235.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 236–237.

a parliamentary vote to dismiss him. Sixth, if that effort failed, have Zahedi and his military seize power.

2. Ideological Packaging and Frames and Framing

For the coup to have any viable support from the Iranian people, it needed to have a master narrative to bring the target audiences together and frames to provide cohesion. The master narrative focused on two major themes; that “Mossadeq was pro-Tudeh and anti-Islamic.”⁷⁰ Under these themes, the CIA launched a black propaganda campaign against Mossadeq.

The intent behind the pro-Tudeh theme was to frame Mossadeq, in the very least, as a pro-Communist sympathizer, causing his political support base to turn against him. Ervand Abrahamian, a noted expert of Middle Eastern and Iranian history, said the following:

A crucial component of the plan was to highlight the supposed communist threat linking the Tudeh to the National Front, exaggerating its strength, inflating its crowds, forging documents to ‘prove’ it had infiltrated the government, claiming it was preparing to pull off a coup, and warning that Mossadeq would wittingly or unwittingly pave the way for the inevitable incorporation of Iran into the Soviet Bloc.⁷¹

In *The U.S. Press and Iran: Foreign Policy and the Journalism of Difference*, authors William A. I Dorman and Mansour Farhang write the following:

The U.S. press was particularly hard on Mossadeq during the six months preceding his overthrow. The two major focal points of press coverage throughout this period were Mossadeq’s personal political ambitions and what was perceived as the increasing vulnerability to communism of Iran under his rule.⁷²

⁷⁰ Gasiorowski, “1953 Coup d’État,” 238.

⁷¹ Ervand Abrahamian, *The Coup: 1953, The CIA, and the Roots of Modern U.S.-Iranian Relations* (New York: New Press), 173.

⁷² William A. Dorman and Mansour Farhang, *The U.S. Press and Iran: Foreign Policy and the Journalism of Deference* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), 41.

The CIA, with the help of the Department of State, planted articles in the American press, which were often republished in Iran.⁷³ In one example, Mark J. Gasiorowski, a professor of political science at Tulane University, conducted an interview with an unnamed CIA representative and learned that the CIA planted an article, titled, “Iran: Reds ... Taking Over,” in the August 10, 1953 issue of *Newsweek*.⁷⁴ In another example of reinforcing of the pro-Tudeh theme, CIA propagandists prepared and released a propaganda piece called, “Our National Character.”⁷⁵ Though the actual release date of this document remains unknown, what is known is that the piece claims that the Mossadeq’s alliance with the Tudeh party has led to the violation of the Iranian cultural norm of open hospitality toward foreigners.⁷⁶

In addition to planting articles in the American press, the CIA received assistance in the form of public declarations from high-ranking U.S. officials, to include President Eisenhower, expressing grave concern over Iran’s relationship with Communism. For example, President Eisenhower’s speech at the Governor’s convention in Seattle stated that the “U.S. would not sit by and see Asian countries fall behind the Iron Curtain.”⁷⁷ At a press conference, Secretary of State John F. Dulles made clear that the United States was hesitant to provide aid over growing concern of the Communist influence in Iran.⁷⁸ Furthermore, in a non-verbal public declaration, Secretary Dulles “made it a special point of not stopping in Tehran during his grand tour of the Middle East” in early August 1953.⁷⁹

As for the anti-Islamic theme, the CIA pulled no punches. The intent behind the anti-Islamic theme was to frame Mossadeq as a secularist supporter, causing his clerical leaders to turn against him. The CIA spread rumors that Mossadeq was of Jewish

⁷³ Wilber, *Regime Change*, 16.

⁷⁴ Gasiorowski, “1953 Coup d’État,” 245.

⁷⁵ National Security Archive, “CIA Confirms Role in 1953 Iran Coup,” August 19, 2013, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB435/>.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Wilber, *Regime Change*, 16.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Abrahamian, *Coup: 1953*, 179.

ancestry.⁸⁰ The CIA planted an article in the Iranian newspaper, *Joshan*, about Mossadeq's close advisor and Foreign Affairs Minister of Iran, Hussein Fatemi.⁸¹ In the article, Fatemi was called a homosexual and a convert to Christianity, which were justifications for death in Iran. The CIA also used its Iranian agents to threaten clerical leaders through the use of "black phone calls" and the staging of a "bombing" at the home of a cleric.⁸² During the coup itself, the Rashidian Network, along with unnamed religious and bazaar leaders, used hordes of demonstrators to denounce Mossadeq as "anti-religious."⁸³

3. Resource Mobilization

When the CIA/SIS team developed the strategy for the coup, the team knew that it would require financial and logistical support to propagate the perception that Mossadeq was pro-Tudeh and anti-Islam and promote the perception of a need for a regime change.

The CIA funded a \$150,000 destabilization campaign.⁸⁴ The destabilization campaign was designed to promote Mossadeq as "corrupt, pro-communist, hostile to Islam, and intent on destroying the morale and readiness of the armed forces."⁸⁵ With \$135,000 allocated to him, General Zahedi "would persuade and bribe as many of his fellow officers as possible to stand ready for whatever military action was necessary to carry out the coup."⁸⁶ The team also allocated \$11,000 per week to bribe members of the Majlis (legislature) for their support.⁸⁷

The team also exploited pre-existing resources to support the coup, TPBEDAMN and the Rashidian Network. Originally, TPBEDAMN was a 1940s anti-Soviet operation

⁸⁰ Abrahamian, *Coup: 1953*, 178.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Gasiorowski, "1953 Coup d'État," 245.

⁸³ Ibid., 237.

⁸⁴ Stephen Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2003), 162–163.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 163.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

that had Iranians translate prepared media products, such as newspaper articles and leaflets, into Persian with the intent of overtly and covertly countering Tudeh propaganda.⁸⁸ The team would now use assets of TPBEDAMN to fund anti-communist organizations to attack Tudeh rallies and to fund denunciations of the Tudeh by Iranian clergymen.⁸⁹ The Rashidian Network was a British intelligence network operated by three brothers, Seyfollah, Asadollah, and Qodratollah, who conducted subversive activities, such as bribing newspaper editors and political leaders on behalf of the British after Mossadeq forced the British to leave Iran.⁹⁰ Prior to the planning of the coup, the Rashidian Network successfully persuaded several prominent members of the National Front to defect, weakening it and leaving Mossadeq open to political attack.⁹¹ The Rashidian Network also was responsible for the death of General Mahmoud Afshartus, the prominent police chief of Iran, a potential obstacle in the upcoming coup.⁹² Once the British SIS turned the Rashidian Network over to the Operation Ajax team, the Rashidian Network continued its subversive activities, such as using its Iranian contacts to organize demonstrations and marches against Mossadeq.⁹³

4. Opportunism and Adaptation

Throughout the coup, the CIA demonstrated remarkable agility in a rapidly changing situation. At first, clerical support for the removal of Mossadeq and the vote of no confidence from the Iranian parliament had failed to materialize. As a result, the CIA had to find another means to dismiss Mossadeq. The CIA turned to the Shah to issues his decrees that dismissed Mossadeq and appointed Zahedi.

After this first coup attempt failed, the CIA rallied to conduct a second attempt that succeeded. The CIA turned to organized political activity. CIA-sponsored crowds

⁸⁸ Gasiorowski, "1953 Coup d'État," 235.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 236.

⁹⁰ de Bellaigue, *Patriot of Persia*, 194.

⁹¹ Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men*, 159.

⁹² Ibid., 160.

⁹³ Gasiorowski, "1953 Coup d'État," 253–254.

would proceed to seize Radio Tehran and the Ministry of Press and Propaganda.⁹⁴ Other crowds would attack the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and protest outside the Soviet Embassy.⁹⁵

5. Presence, Tactics and Deeds

Much has been said about the CIA's ability to launch subversive propaganda and orchestrate mass protests. The CIA often used black propaganda. The CIA posed as members of the Tudeh party and threatened clerical leaders who opposed Mossadeq.⁹⁶ The CIA also faked a bombing of a clerical leader's home.⁹⁷ The CIA wrote anti-Mossadeq newspaper articles. The CIA also bribed government officials to elicit their support. "As part of its 'war of nerves' against Mossadeq, the CIA team convinced heads of the U.S. economic and military assistance groups in Iran to reduce their contact with pro-Mossadeq officials."⁹⁸ The CIA team played upon the Iranian cultural norm of public protesting. However, a critical action of the coup has yet to be discussed, Major General Norman Schwarzkopf's persuasion of the Shah to sign the decrees.⁹⁹

The most critical aspect of the coup was to have the Shah issue formal decrees dismissing Mossadeq as the Prime Minister and proclaiming General Zahedi as the new Prime Minister. This aspect would be the legal foundation for Zahedi's assumption of power.¹⁰⁰ However, the Shah had to be convinced that he had the support of the U.S. and British governments.¹⁰¹ At first, the plotters attempted to use Princess Ashraf, the Shah's twin sister to persuade the Shah to sign the decrees. Her attempt failed and only caused

⁹⁴ Gasiorowski, "1953 Coup d'État," 254–255.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 255.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 245.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ MG H. Norman Schwarzkopf, Sr. is the father of GEN H. Norman Schwarzkopf, Jr., the CENTCOM Commander during the Persian Gulf War.

¹⁰⁰ de Bellaigue, *Patriot of Persia*, 223.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 224.

more consternation once word of her return to Iran was leaked. Thankfully, she returned to Europe quickly.¹⁰² Undeterred, Roosevelt turned to Schwarzkopf.

MG Schwarzkopf had established rapport with the Shah, something Roosevelt knew and planned to exploit. Schwarzkopf, who had previously commanded the Iranian gendarmerie from 1942–1948 and knew the Shah personally, arrived in Iran under the auspices of a regional Middle Eastern tour.¹⁰³ At the Saad Abad Palace on August 1, 1953, Schwarzkopf and the Shah met to discuss the signing of the decrees.¹⁰⁴ The Shah proclaimed to his friend that he was still unsure whether to sign the decrees. Schwarzkopf informed the Shah that there was no other solution. Though the meeting did not produce the desired intent, Schwarzkopf did leave feeling that the Shah needed only one more visit, or more accurately one more visitor, to reassure the Shah and solicit his signatures. Over the next few days, Roosevelt, with the assistance of Asadollah Rashidian, would visit the Shah to persuade him to sign the decrees, which the Shah ultimately did.

E. TESTING OF THE HYPOTHESES

After applying the factors of SMT to the Iran Coup d'Etat of 1953, it can be determined that the coup was a successful social movement because the agent provocateurs were able to shape and control the perceptions of the population to facilitate a regime change. First, the CIA team crafted an ideological framework that vilified Mossadeq as an illegitimate leader and an enemy of Iran due to his perceived stance as a communist and a secularist sympathizer. Second, with that framework as its foundation, the CIA team leveraged existing grievances and exploited regime vulnerabilities via its implementation of a massive black propaganda campaign prior to conducting major physical action. Third, the CIA team mobilized its resources, particularly the Rashidian Network, to target key communicators who were willing and capable of disseminating desired themes, such as susceptible leaders in the Majlis and the influential men of the local bazaars. Last, as messages and activity criticizing and discrediting the Mossadeq

¹⁰² Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men*, 8.

¹⁰³ Abrahamian, *Coup: 1953*, 180.

¹⁰⁴ Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men*, 8.

regime grew, so did the anti-Mossadeq perception. In fact, by 1953, most leaders of the National Front, the main power base for Mossadeq, had turned against him.

III. GUATEMALA

A. SYNOPSIS

Jacobo Árbenz became the President of Guatemala in 1951 after serving as a professional military officer who rose to the rank of colonel and later became the Minister of Defense. President Árbenz was elected from the Revolutionary Party and central to his presidential mandate was land reform, specifically an agrarian reform bill known as Decree 900.¹⁰⁵ The decree took uncultivated lands from plantations larger than 672 acres, while leaving smaller farms alone. The Guatemalan Government then issued 25-year bonds at 3% interest based on the reported value of the land to those whose lands were seized by the government. For some landowners, such as the United Fruit Company, an American corporation, this was a problem because United Fruit Company and other businesses “undervalued its land for years in order to reduce its tax liability.”¹⁰⁶

International interferences by corporations such as the United Fruit Company into the agrarian affairs of Guatemala influenced President Árbenz to implement his decree 900. President Árbenz addressed the Guatemalan Congress, stating: “we face a growing threat of foreign intervention in the internal affairs of Guatemala, placing in danger the stability of our constitutional life and the integrity of our national independence.”¹⁰⁷ The United States, and specifically the United Fruit Company, was identified as a potential threat by President Árbenz.

The United Fruit Company was operating in Guatemala well before President Árbenz came to office and had much invested in Guatemala. The company owned nearly one-fifth of Guatemala’s arable land, which was more than 550,000 acres, but only cultivated 15% of the land.¹⁰⁸ Under Decree 900, the Árbenz government seized land

¹⁰⁵ George Black, Milton H. Jamail, and Norma Stoltz Chinchilla, *Garrison Guatemala* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), 13.

¹⁰⁶ Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982), 54.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁰⁸ Kinzer, *Overthrow*, 133.

from the United Fruit Company and offered compensation based on the underreported value reported by the company.¹⁰⁹ The United Fruit Company became very displeased with the actions of the Árbenz administration regarding land seizures and brought the situation to the attention of the United States government.

The United Fruit Company also had many prominent and strategically positioned members and allies in the United States government. This included John Foster Dulles, the U.S. Secretary of State, and his brother, Allen Dulles, the Director of the CIA. Both brothers were involved in the legal affairs of the United Fruit Company and Allen even owned stock. The Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, John Moors Cabot, also held stock in the company. The Director of Department of State's International Security Affairs, Thomas Dudley Cabot, the brother of John Moors Cabot had been the company's president. The head of the National Security Council, General Robert Cutler, was formerly the company's chairman of the board. Lastly, the president of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, John J. McCloy, was a former board member as well.¹¹⁰ Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and his colleagues were determined to remove the Árbenz regime.¹¹¹

President Dwight Eisenhower took the position that President Árbenz was a communist and his agricultural reform was a result of his politics based on communist ideals. One of President Árbenz's actions was to allow the legalization of the Communist Party in Guatemala, which allowed Marxists to occupy important positions in the Guatemalan Government including positions involving agricultural reform.¹¹² Despite the political decisions and policies of Árbenz, there was no true connection between Guatemala and the Soviet Union, and no matter how hard the United States looked, a connection could not be found.¹¹³ The absence of a direct connection between

¹⁰⁹ Kinzer, *Overthrow*, 133.

¹¹⁰ Nick Cullather, *Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala, 1952–1954* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 129–130.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹¹² Susanne Jonas, *The Battle for Guatemala: Rebels, Death Squads, and U.S. Power* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 31.

¹¹³ Kinzer, *Overthrow*, 136.

Guatemala and the Soviet Union did not dissuade the United States from applying the Truman Doctrine to Guatemala, which stated that the United States must: “support free people who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.”¹¹⁴ John Foster Dulles declared that it was “impossible to produce evidence clearly tying the Guatemalan government to Moscow”¹¹⁵ However, he believed leaders were acting against the Guatemalan government “based on the deep conviction that such a tie must exist”¹¹⁶ and therefore, the United States had to remove Árbenz and replace him with a cooperative leader.¹¹⁷ The Central Intelligence Agency was given the task of planning, coordinating and executing operations to depose President Árbenz.¹¹⁸

After the decision was made to overthrow the Árbenz government, a suitable replacement had to be found who would be amenable to the needs of the United States. The search led the CIA to Carlos Castillo, a former Guatemalan military officer who was in exile after a previously failed uprising in Guatemala; he was also popular in the anti-Árbenz movement outside of Guatemala.¹¹⁹ When the CIA approached Castillo to recruit him to become the leader of the Army of Liberation, he immediately accepted the offer.¹²⁰

According to the CIA, their plan for overthrowing the Árbenz regime entailed:

cutting off military aid to Guatemala, increasing aid to its neighbors, exerting diplomatic and economic pressure against Arbenz and attempts to subvert and or defect Army and political leaders, broad scale psychological warfare and paramilitary actions.¹²¹

¹¹⁴ Jonas, *Battle for Guatemala*, 33.

¹¹⁵ Kinzer, *Overthrow*, 136.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, “Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954, Retrospective Volume, Guatemala, Document 287,” U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, May 12, 1975, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54Guat/d287>.

¹¹⁹ Schlesinger and Kinzer. *Bitter Fruit*, 123.

¹²⁰ Kinzer, *Overthrow*, 138.

¹²¹ CIA, “Document 287.”

The training for the Castillo group took place in Nicaragua and included 85 members who were trained in the areas of sabotage, leadership, and support roles. An additional 260 men were located in Honduras and El Salvador to act as shock and support troops. Air operations were used to bomb and attack targets as well as to move cargo and disseminate propaganda. The propaganda channels used against Árbenz largely relied on leaflet and radio, but another channel of influence employed by the CIA against the Árbenz regime was getting the Roman Catholic clergy to turn their congregates against President Árbenz. The clergy were more in line with the ruling class of Guatemala and did not support reformers like President Árbenz.¹²²

The plan to overthrow Árbenz began with a psychological operations campaign that was initiated seven weeks before the actual invasion force entered Guatemala. It was a campaign of disinformation intended to spread fear and panic.¹²³ The PSYOP campaign began in Guatemala City where leaflets were dropped by CIA aircraft and stated that there would be bombings unless President Árbenz quit immediately; the leaflets were self-attributed to the “National Liberation Front.”¹²⁴ The CIA followed through on the threat and conducted attacks by aircraft when Árbenz did not leave office. The CIA dropped more leaflets as the aircraft departed.¹²⁵ The Chief of the Political and Psychological Staff, Tracy Barnes stated: “I suppose it doesn’t really matter what the leaflets say,” he believed that the real message was the aerial attack itself.¹²⁶ According to an editorialist, the subsequent leaflet drops were believed to be practice runs for bombing raids.¹²⁷ Additional leaflets were dropped targeting Guatemalan military officers with an appeal for the officers to lead their forces against President Árbenz, and also claimed that Árbenz was preparing to dissolve the military and replace it with a citizen force.¹²⁸ The propaganda directed at the Guatemalan officer corps had some

¹²² Kinzer, *Overthrow*, 138.

¹²³ Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 167.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹²⁶ Cullather, *Secret History*, 136.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

affect; an American advisor stated “a great number of the officers are extremely unhappy about the Communists in the government and the poor U.S.-Guatemalan relations.”¹²⁹ Though promising, the psychological campaign from January to the end of April in 1954 to influence the Guatemalan officer corps was not achieving its intended purpose.¹³⁰ Also critical to the PSYOP strategy was radio.

The CIA established the “Voice of Liberation” radio stations throughout the region surrounding Guatemala. The stations were able to operate on the same frequencies used by the Guatemalan Government, which allowed local stations to be preempted when necessary. Even though the Voice of Liberation Radio was actually positioned outside Guatemala, part of the deception was that it was located “deep in the Guatemalan jungle.”¹³¹ The CIA also trained three Guatemalans to operate a radio station in Florida to support their broadcast operations.¹³² Training the Guatemalans allowed the CIA to use them to conduct audience assessments of Guatemalan listeners. The CIA trained radio operators saw it as their duty to intimidate hardcore Marxist’s and Árbenz supporters, while influencing those who were neutral to oppose communism. The radio broadcasts also reinforced the message that Árbenz was preparing to dissolve the military and replace it with a citizen force.¹³³

On June 18, 1954, Carlos Castillo was inside Honduras with his invasion force. After dawn, Castillo and his forces drove their motorcade six miles into Guatemala at the direction of the CIA, and then halted their invasion of Guatemala.¹³⁴ As Árbenz attempted to deal with the invasion diplomatically rather than militarily, the “Voice of Liberation” radio was reporting the “swift progress” made by Castillo’s forces.¹³⁵ The radio stations appealed for citizens to support Castillo’s forces and proclaimed them as

¹²⁹ Cullather, *Secret History*, 69.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 73.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 170.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 114.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 168.

¹³⁴ Kinzer, *Overthrow*, 141.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 142.

their liberators. This played into the CIA's strategy as Carlos Castillo and his Liberation Army "served as a psychological rather than military function."¹³⁶

The operation relied on:

psychological impact rather than on actual military strength, although it is upon the ability of the Castillo Armas effort to create and maintain the impression of very substantial military strength, and that the success of this particular effort primarily depends.¹³⁷

The perception and narrative that Aramas commanded a formidable force was critical to the desired psychological impact upon the Guatemalans.

Rumor was also a powerful tool during the invasion. Rumor was spread that thousands of volunteers were joining Castillo as he advanced through Guatemala; this greatly disturbed the regime.¹³⁸ To add to the confusion, the CIA established the "Voice of Liberation" radio stations throughout the region surrounding Guatemala. The stations were able to operate on the same frequencies used by the Guatemalan Government, which allowed local stations to be preempted when necessary.

As the PSYOP campaign and the CIA air assaults continued to strike targets, including indigenous radio stations, support for Árbenz began to shrink and the masses grew "apathetic" towards Árbenz.¹³⁹ The Catholic Church also contributed to Árbenz's loss of support by informing the people of what they might lose under Árbenz's rule.¹⁴⁰ Árbenz never had a counterpropaganda capability to rival the effects of the CIA's PSYOP campaign and his best efforts to influence his followers hinged upon his appeal by radio, but his radio appeals were jammed.¹⁴¹

In May 1954, the CIA's propaganda efforts were successful in presenting Guatemala as a repressive regime. This was due to the reaction the Guatemalan

¹³⁶ Cullather, *Secret History*, 74.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 185.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 189.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 204.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 169.

government, which revoked the freedom of speech and assembly. Independent newspapers and radio stations were also intimidated into closure.¹⁴² The same month, Guatemala received a shipment of Czech weapons aboard the *MS Alfhem*. This shipment of weapons from the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic boosted the propaganda message that Guatemala was tied to the Soviets. The American press proclaimed that the Soviet threat did indeed exist in the Western Hemisphere. The Washington post stated: “it has arrived.” The United States Congress also believed that the threat was real; the House Speaker, John McCormack stated: “this cargo of arms is like an atom bomb placed in the rear of our backyard.”¹⁴³

Finally, on June 27, 1954, President Arbenz made the decision to surrender after losing only 15 soldiers with another 25 wounded.¹⁴⁴ According to David Phillips, the CIA agent responsible for “Voice of Liberty” Radio, this came as a surprise. When President Arbenz gave his surrender speech, the CIA “expected him to tell his people that he had won.” The victory came as a surprise to Phillips because: “We thought we’d lost...we were so surprised by his departure.”¹⁴⁵

B. GUATEMALAN PERCEPTIONS OF THE UNITED STATES PRIOR TO THE COUP

Prior to launching the coup d’état, the perception of the U.S. Government and the American People *towards Guatemala* was largely negative. The United States Government held that the Guatemalan Government was communist in nature and the American people concurred because bipartisan Congressional leadership presented it to them; the intervention in Guatemala was “a bipartisan consensus policy.”¹⁴⁶ With this bipartisan consensus, there was no opposition to action against Guatemala; the resolution for action in Guatemala passed the U.S. House with a vote of 372 to 0. This occurred at a time when the American People believed, through “a concerted campaign” that the Soviet

¹⁴² Cullather, *Secret History*, 67.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 79.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 194.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 204.

¹⁴⁶ Jonas, *Battle for Guatemala*, 33.

Union was no longer an ally, but now an “evil empire.” This was further enhanced by the public relations efforts of the United Fruit Company¹⁴⁷ and the effort of public relations expert, Edward Bernays who labeled Guatemala as Communist regime in the Caribbean.¹⁴⁸

President Árbenz’s election to office was “convincing” even though his Revolutionary party had lost considerable popular support.¹⁴⁹ The decrease in the Revolutionary party’s support indicated that there was an increased opposition to reforms from the landowners and capitalists.¹⁵⁰ Both groups were opposed to the agricultural land reforms Árbenz enacted that took land away from the large plantations and corporations and gave it to the supportive peasantry, which included over 100,000 families and 1.5 million acres.¹⁵¹ In addition, opposing President Árbenz were moderates who were in opposition to elements of his agenda as well as partisans from the pre-1944 regime,¹⁵² and the Catholic Church, which believed that President Árbenz would undermine the authority and influence of the Church. President Árbenz’s most strident support came from the young Communists.¹⁵³

C. GUATEMALAN PERCEPTIONS OF THE UNITED STATES AFTER THE COUP

Immediately following the coup d’état, the perceptions of the United States Government and the American People towards Guatemala was more favorable after Carlos Castillo replaced President Árbenz. However, American journalists ultimately came to their own conclusion that the coup was: “to protect the corporate interests of the

¹⁴⁷ Jonas, *Battle for Guatemala*, 33.

¹⁴⁸ Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 84.

¹⁴⁹ Black, Jamail, and Chinchilla, *Garrison Guatemala*, 13.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁵¹ Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 13.

¹⁵² Nicholas Culather, *Operation PBSUCCESS: The United States and Guatemala, 1952–1954* (Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, 1994), <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB4/docs/doc05.pdf>.

¹⁵³ Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 204.

United Fruit Company.”¹⁵⁴ Despite the regime change, the United Fruit Company benefited very little because of an antitrust lawsuit against the Company and the Company eventually ceased to exist by the late 1960s.¹⁵⁵

After accession to the Presidency, Carlos Castillo favored his powerful constituency, the landowners and political opportunists.¹⁵⁶ As the CIA selection for the Presidency of Guatemala, the Guatemalans knew that the United States would not let Castillo fail.¹⁵⁷ Carlos Castillo fell out of favor with the peasantry after he banned illiterates from voting, which affected nearly three quarters of the population, and when he rescinded the agricultural reform bill, Decree 900.¹⁵⁸ Schlesinger and Kinzer best summed up the final outcome of the coup for the United States:

Over the longer term, the coup gravely damaged American interests in Latin America. The gusto with which the United States had ended the Guatemalan revolution embittered many Latins, and strengthened deep-seated anti-Americanism throughout the continent.¹⁵⁹

The United States got the regime change it wanted, but not the desired outcome.

D. APPLICATION OF SMT TO GUATEMALA

1. Leadership

It was Árbenz’s land reforms, which ultimately brought the concerns of the United Fruit Company in Guatemala to the attention of the Dulles brothers, John Dulles the Secretary of State and Allen Dulles, the head of the CIA, and ultimately, President Eisenhower, whom supported counterrevolutionary action against Jacobo Árbenz.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁴ Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 203.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 229.

¹⁵⁶ Culather, *Operation PBSUCCESS*.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 221.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 229.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 102.

The CIA began planning for the removal of President Jacobo Árbenz in August 1953, less than a year before the coup was initiated.¹⁶¹ The CIA selected Carlos Castillo to lead the CIA funded Liberation Army because he was a military commander and the operation was a military operation.¹⁶² Castillo led a failed uprising in Guatemala during the 1950s and was well known in the Guatemalan exile community.¹⁶³ He was the leader of the largest rebel group and had significant paramilitary and intelligence assets. However, he lacked combat experience.¹⁶⁴ Castillo was also able to gain the backing of Nicaragua, El Salvador, Venezuela, and the Dominican Republic in addition to the United States.¹⁶⁵

Critical to the success of Operations in Guatemala was the perception that the Liberation Army led by Castillo was capable of winning and that once it became committed to battle, that it was indeed winning. To achieve this effect, it was incumbent upon Castillo to “create and maintain the impression of a very substantial military strength.”¹⁶⁶ This meant that Castillo had to portray the image of a competent military leader who was up to the task. With the support of the CIA, through the creation of the Liberation Army and the use of radio and air power, the perception presented was that Castillo was viewed as being in charge and taking Guatemala on his own.

2. Ideological Packaging

The decision for regime change in Guatemala was largely based on the land reforms President Árbenz enacted and how they affected the United Fruit Corporation. The Árbenz government was viewed as leftist based on its land reforms and the United States assumed wrongly that Árbenz was transforming Guatemala into a communist state and operating in concert with Moscow.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶¹ CIA, “Document 287.”

¹⁶² Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 122.

¹⁶³ Kinzer, *Overthrow*, 138.

¹⁶⁴ Cullather, *Secret History*, 49.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 125.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁶⁷ Kinzer, *Overthrow*, 135.

Members of the Eisenhower administration, including the Dulles brothers, regarded these reforms as proof of Communist influence.¹⁶⁸ Árbenz legalized the communist party;¹⁶⁹ however, the reality was that their reach and influence in the government was minimal.¹⁷⁰ However, this act, coupled with his agricultural reforms, drove the United States to take action against the perceived communist regime.

Anti-communism became the narrative used against Árbenz by the United States. This was done through the print and broadcast media. The American television network, CBS broadcast a documentary titled “Red Rule in Guatemala,” which focused on the threat Guatemala posed to the Panama Canal. *The Reader’s Digest*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, and even *The New York Times* all printed articles that highlighted the Communist dangers that the Árbenz government posed to the United States.¹⁷¹ Even after Árbenz revealed the plot against him to the press, it was “dismissed as a Communist ploy.”¹⁷²

When economic sanctions were enacted against Guatemala by the United States, pressure was put on neighboring countries not to provide military and economic support. As a result, Guatemala was forced to seek alternate vendors for necessary military support.¹⁷³ This meant that Guatemala had to order weapons from Czechoslovakia, which arrived via commercial shipping from Sweden on a vessel named the *Alfhem*; it carried 4,900 tons of weapons. The United States and the Liberation Army failed to interdict the vessel and the weapons were delivered to the Guatemalan military.¹⁷⁴ Even though the CIA and Liberation Forces were unable to interdict the delivery, the United States was able to exploit the propaganda value of the Guatemalan government seeking support from a Communist country. President Eisenhower then called Guatemala “an

¹⁶⁸ Kinzer, *Overthrow*, 133.

¹⁶⁹ Jonas, *Battle for Guatemala*, 31.

¹⁷⁰ Kinzer, *Overthrow*, 135.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 148.

¹⁷⁴ Prados, *Presidents’ Secret Wars*, 105.

outpost of the communist dictatorship on the American continent” during a news conference.¹⁷⁵ The United States Congress and American press followed suit declaring the Communist threat real to the Hemisphere.¹⁷⁶

3. Frames and Framing

In the United States, Edward Bernays was a public relations consultant whose efforts worked to the benefit of the United Fruit Company and the United States’ effort to depose Árbenz. Bernays influenced liberal columnists to cover the United Fruit Company’s problems in Guatemala to raise attention and attack the Guatemalan government.¹⁷⁷ Bernays was very effective at influencing American public opinion as was evidenced when an American writer and scholar visited Guatemala and found the media portrayal of Guatemala to be counter to what was being reported and challenged the narrative. Bernays continued the media assault on Guatemala by convincing *The New York Post* to write about “the growing dangers of communism in the Guatemalan government;” which consisted of a series of reports about the Guatemalan government. Bernays then organized several two-week “fact-finding” trips to the region with many reporters to keep the attention on Guatemala.¹⁷⁸ Bernays used his connections with a liberal anti-communist publication called “The New Leader,” to get the United Fruit Company to sponsor public service announcements in the publication at rates higher than required for positive coverage, a practice that continued after the coup.¹⁷⁹ The final result of Edward Bernays’ efforts was “an atmosphere of deep suspicion and fear in the United States about the nature and intentions of the Guatemalan government.”¹⁸⁰ As a result of Bernays’ work, the United States came to oppose the Guatemalan regime. This allowed the United States government to proceed without interference or difficulty in

¹⁷⁵ Prados, *Presidents’ Secret Wars*, 103.

¹⁷⁶ Cullather, *Secret History*, 79.

¹⁷⁷ Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 84.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 90.

presenting its opposition to the government of Guatemala and facilitated the support of its neighbors in the Central American region.

To define the problem as communism and identify those at fault in Guatemala, the United States needed to show that the Árbenz regime was the cause. The CIA used diagnostic framing through the Catholic Church to “turn Guatemalans against Arbenz”¹⁸¹ during Catholic mass. The narrative used against the Árbenz regime by the Catholic Church then escalated into a prognostic narrative as Guatemalan clergy then warned that “a demonic force called communism was trying to destroy their homeland,” and called upon listeners to “rise as a single man against this enemy of God and country.”¹⁸² The narrative was reinforced through leaflets and radio broadcasts from CIA radio stations with programming known as the Voice of Liberation. The CIA trained Guatemalans to operate the radio stations, who were then able to conduct audience assessments to determine the composition of the listenership.¹⁸³ By doing audience analyses, Voice of Liberation Radio was able to determine the composition of the target audience they sought to influence. Voice of Liberation sought to persuade the 60% of the neutral population to join those who were anti-communists or who were against the trend of moving towards communism. A key objective of the leaflet and radio campaign was to use a motivational narrative to create a divide between Árbenz and the Guatemalan Army to help facilitate the invasion by Castillo.¹⁸⁴ The CIA did this by appealing directly to Guatemalan military officers and soldiers to rise up against Árbenz by claiming that he was going to replace the military with a militia force.¹⁸⁵

4. Resource Mobilization

To ensure the overthrow of the Guatemalan government, the CIA had to maintain the necessary resources to achieve their goal. The CIA had to create, finance, and arm a liberation army and an air force to conduct combat operations against the Árbenz regime

¹⁸¹ Kinzer, *Overthrow*, 138.

¹⁸² Ibid., 138.

¹⁸³ Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 168.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 8.

to overthrow it. The CIA used a front company known as the International Armament Company (InterArmco) to provide rebel forces with Russian armaments that could not be linked to the United States and to give the impression that the Soviet Union was “trying to establish a foothold in the country.”¹⁸⁶ InterArmco was not the only corporation giving support to the rebels. The United Fruit Company also agreed to support the rebels by providing them with weapons and the use of their train line to move weapons for the rebels in Guatemala. The United Fruit Company only asked that they receive back the land that Árbenz took in his land reforms. The CIA recruited Carlos Castillo Armas who was popular in the anti-Árbenz movement and had been involved in an earlier overthrow attempt that failed. Carlos Castillo Armas was given \$3 million from the CIA to fund the coup and was the man the United Fruit Company worked with to support the invasion.¹⁸⁷ Castillo was not a great military leader, but he was good enough to make the operation successful.

The Liberation Army was manned by Guatemalan exiles¹⁸⁸ and formed in neighboring Nicaragua and Honduras in preparation for the invasion.¹⁸⁹ The Army served more of a “psychological rather than military function”¹⁹⁰ when Castillo “invaded” Guatemala. The Air Force was also created from local Guatemalans as well as from the CIA’s own employees of the Civil Air Transport Company, and would be critical to the success of the operation.¹⁹¹ Efforts were made to give the appearance that the liberation forces were not American: “participants would acknowledge that if some of the Guatemalan rebel aircraft had been shot down, the surviving pilots would have been found—speaking Chinese.”¹⁹²

¹⁸⁶ Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 115.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 126.

¹⁸⁸ Kinzer, *Overthrow*, 139.

¹⁸⁹ Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 128.

¹⁹⁰ Cullather, *Secret History*, 74.

¹⁹¹ Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 116.

¹⁹² Prados, *Presidents’ Secret Wars*, 101.

5. Opportunism and Adaptation

In Guatemala, the CIA and Carlos Castillo were able to capitalize on several existing conditions, which allowed them to gain the advantage. Guatemala had a fractured government with a leader, Jacobo Árbenz, who did not have the support of the most influential population. The capitalists, the landowners, and the Catholic Church disliked Árbenz, as did many moderates who opposed parts of his agenda. However, more troubling for Árbenz was the relationship that he had with his military. This was because Árbenz never replaced the military's leadership with new leaders who were sympathetic to Árbenz's agenda and a secret anti-Árbenz element existed in the military.¹⁹³ The CIA and invasion forces, through their PSYOP campaign, attempted to put a wedge between Árbenz and his officers in hopes of exploiting this vulnerability during the coup.¹⁹⁴ It did not achieve its desired effect, but it did create an extreme unhappiness about the Communists in the Guatemalan government and the poor U.S.-Guatemalan relations.

6. Presence, Tactics and Deeds

The United States was effective in overthrowing the Árbenz regime through the integration of PSYOP, air, and land forces in conjunction with the diplomatic actions of the United States. The mix of strategies used in Guatemala added to the perception that the invasion force sent to liberate Guatemala was larger and more powerful than it was in reality and demonstrated the effectiveness of the multiple assets employed. It proved effective enough to persuade President Jacobo Árbenz to resign as President only 15 days after the commencement of the invasion by the liberation forces.

The preemptive psychological warfare messaging was critical to creating the perception of an impending invasion. Air operations were essential in disseminating leaflets and then reinforcing the messaging by conducting the very attacks that were announced in the leaflets.¹⁹⁵ When President Eisenhower enquired about the

¹⁹³ Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 206.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 189.

effectiveness of a coup without aircraft, Allen Dulles, the CIA director, advised the President that their chances were “about zero.”¹⁹⁶ The total number of aircraft used in the liberation was about a dozen and included three bombers.¹⁹⁷ They were effective and became the main rebel activity during the invasion.¹⁹⁸ The Liberation Army was small in number, only 200 members, but effective for the task for which they had been created. After invading Guatemala, the PSYOP campaign, broadcasts and rumor, gave the liberation army more legitimacy than the force could have achieved on its own.

E. TESTING OF THE HYPOTHESIS

After applying the SMT factors to the Guatemalan coup, it can be determined that the coup was a success because the United States Government took the position that President Árbenz was a communist and his agricultural reform was a result of his politics based on communist ideology. One of President Árbenz’s actions was to allow the legalization of the Communist Party in Guatemala, which allowed Marxists to hold important positions in the Guatemalan Government, including positions involving the agricultural reform bill.

The Arbenz land acts fit the profile of what a communist government would enact by taking land and redistributing it to the people. When President Árbenz allowed the legalization of the Communist Party in Guatemala, Marxists began to occupy important positions in the Guatemalan Government. It was still difficult to prove that President Árbenz was a communist. This was confirmed when the propaganda campaign that targeted the Guatemalan officer corps failed to achieve its goal of putting a wedge between President Árbenz and his Army officer corps. However, the propaganda did raise serious concerns that President Árbenz and his government were likely communists. An American advisor to the Guatemalan Army made the observation that Guatemalan officers were extremely unhappy about the communists in their government and the poor relations between Guatemala and the United States.

¹⁹⁶ Prados, *Presidents’ Secret Wars*, 103.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 105.

The operation to overthrow Árbenz began with a PSYOP campaign that was initiated seven weeks before the actual invasion force entered Guatemala. The PSYOP campaign began in Guatemala City when CIA aircraft dropped leaflets, which stated that there would be subsequent bombings unless President Árbenz quit. The PSYOP campaign also incorporated radio stations throughout the region and were able to broadcast on frequencies used by the Guatemalan government.

The CIA established the “Voice of Liberation” radio stations throughout the region. The stations were able to operate on the same frequencies used by the Guatemalan Government, which allowed local stations to be preempted when necessary. President Árbenz never had an effective counterpropaganda capability to rival the effects of the CIA’s PSYOP campaign and his best efforts to influence his followers hinged upon his appeal by radio, however his radio appeals were jammed.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁹ Prados, *Presidents’ Secret Wars*, 169.

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IV. NICARAGUA

A. SYNOPSIS

The Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) led by Daniel Ortega was responsible for an insurgency that overthrew Nicaraguan President Anastasio Somoza in 1979. As a result, Somoza was forced to cede control of the country to the Sandinista FSLN, flee Nicaragua, ultimately leading to Daniel Ortega's rule. The United States became concerned with the rise of the Sandinistas during the Nicaraguan revolution because of the recent American experience with Communism in Cuba and Vietnam.

Much of America's foreign policy was directed against the spread and influence of communism and when Ronald Reagan was elected President of the United States in 1980, he enacted what became known as the "Reagan Doctrine." In the fight against communism, the Reagan Doctrine expanded the existing policies of resistance to Soviet influence to a policy of supporting groups that would fight governments that aligned with the Soviet Union.²⁰⁰ In Nicaragua, those were the anti-communist freedom fighters known as the Contras. President Reagan's supporters stated that the President was: "performing a moral duty and fulfilling a strategic purpose."²⁰¹

There were historical and diplomatic considerations important to Nicaragua as well. Cuba, under the leadership of Fidel Castro underwent a Communist revolution. This led to the U.S. strategic failure at the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban missile crisis. The United States had poorly handled Cuba from the very beginning and Cuba's success against the United States was inspiring revolution throughout Latin America. With the popularity of revolution, the United States and other Latin countries did not wish to see another "Cuba" happen in the region.²⁰² The United States was also only half a decade past the end of the Vietnam War. The wounds of that war were still visible and the

²⁰⁰ William G. Hyland, ed., *The Reagan Foreign Policy* (New York: New American Library, 1987), 142.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 214.

²⁰² Jiri Valenta and Durán Esperanza, eds., *Conflict in Nicaragua: A Multidimensional Perspective* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 44.

rebuilding of the American Military was ongoing. The will of the American people to go to war again was low.²⁰³ These considerations made the use of indigenous guerrilla forces with support from the United States more appealing through the lens of the Reagan Doctrine.

In Nicaragua, Sandinista rule was controversial with the middle and upper classes because they feared the Sandinistas would impose a “Soviet-style state and economy.”²⁰⁴

When the Sandinistas took control of Nicaragua, President Carter offered economic assistance in an effort to promote a more right-leaning government.²⁰⁵ However, despite assistance from the United States, the Sandinistas sought arms and military support abroad from Socialist Bloc.²⁰⁶ This created an opportunity for the United States to label the Sandinistas as communists to gain support against them. It was an unpopular idea to use direct action against the Sandinistas, but the use of a proxy force, in this case the Contras, was consistent with the Reagan Doctrine.

In 1978, President Carter was concerned with the growing opposition in Nicaragua against the Somoza regime, which the United States had placed in power in 1932.²⁰⁷ President Carter’s policies were derived from the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, which holds, in part, that uncontrolled change in Central America was bad for the hemisphere.²⁰⁸ President Carter tried to undermine the Nicaraguan Revolution and the gains made by the Sandinista Front for National Liberation (FSLN) beginning in 1979, an effort continued by two subsequent Presidential administrations seeking to halt the Sandinista rule in Nicaragua and returning to a democracy.²⁰⁹ Within 6 months of the Sandinista victory in 1979, President Carter authorized the CIA to support political

²⁰³ Valenta and Esperanza, *Conflict in Nicaragua*, 44.

²⁰⁴ Thomas W. Walker, *Revolution & Counterrevolution in Nicaragua* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 9.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 325.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 82.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 324.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 323.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 232.

opponents of the Sandinistas, including influence operations.²¹⁰ After President Reagan entered office in 1980, his administration departed from the policies of his predecessor.

Reagan strongly opposed the spread of communism and Soviet influence and sought to roll their effects back throughout the world. There was a belief that if the United States could not stop the spread of communism so close to home, then it could not effectively act elsewhere in the world when necessary. National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane declared, “We had to win this one.”²¹¹ While this belief persisted in the administration, the President could not gain support from the people of the United States to send American troops into Nicaragua so soon after the Vietnam War; the solution would require covert means. Finding it necessary to get U.S. Congressional support for any meaningful action in Nicaragua, the Reagan administration, through the U.S. State Department, established a “white propaganda” operation.²¹² The program was focused on building popular support within the U.S. Congress to fund of the Contras; it was not created to build popular support within Nicaragua against the Sandinistas.²¹³

Another method used by the United States to influence support against the Sandinistas was the insertion of articles and opinion pieces in major newspapers. These papers included *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and other major papers in Europe and Latin America. The common theme of the articles was that extremists were leading the revolution and centrists were to be favored.²¹⁴ An article by Marlise Simons from the Washington Post, said the following:

Despite the revolutionary euphoria of the past month, the first signs of opposition to Nicaragua’s new government are coming from the extreme left, and not as widely anticipated, from the businessmen. At the same

²¹⁰ Bob Woodward, *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA, 1981–1987* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 113.

²¹¹ Walker, *Revolution & Counterrevolution*, 325.

²¹² Johnathan S. Miller, “‘White Propaganda’ Operation Memo,” U.S. Department of State, March 13, 1985, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB40/00940.pdf>.

²¹³ J. Jacobowitz, “Public Diplomacy Action Plan Support for the White House Educational Campaign,” National Security Archive, March 12, 1985, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB40/00934.pdf>.

²¹⁴ Pedro Camejo and Fred Murphy, eds., *The Nicaraguan Revolution* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1979), 74.

time, the government's first act of political impatience has been to expel some 60 Latin American Trotskyists whom it charged with being "counterrevolutionaries" and "creating problems for the Sandinista revolution."²¹⁵

In March of 1981, President Reagan signed the National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) number 17, which authorized the CIA to conduct covert action against the Sandinistas.²¹⁶ A presidential finding following the NSDD signing stated "the U.S. aim was merely to interdict the flow of arms from Nicaragua to El Salvador"²¹⁷ The NSDD, in fact, authorized paramilitary operations by the CIA between 1981–1988; military operations beginning in 1982, consisting primarily of U.S. Army Special Operations Forces (SOF), including psychological operations; and a propaganda war waged by the CIA supported by the U.S. Army PSYOP elements.²¹⁸

The CIA supported the Contras, with fiscal and military support to overthrow the Sandinista government of Nicaragua. The United States had four objectives in supporting the Contras against the Sandinistas. First, get the Sandinistas to stop their support for insurgencies in the region. Second, disrupt Sandinista support for guerrillas in El Salvador. Third, disrupt the internal consolidation in Nicaragua by the FSLN and fourth, bring the Sandinistas closer to negotiation.²¹⁹

The United States military positioned special operations forces in various Central American countries in a series of maneuvers intended to make the Sandinistas fear the possibility of an invasion by the United States and to execute PSYOP.²²⁰ The CIA supported the La Prensa newspaper, which was owned and operated by the Chamorro family and a symbol of opposition to the Sandinistas.²²¹ The CIA also supported a

²¹⁵ Camejo and Murphy, *Nicaraguan Revolution*, 74–75.

²¹⁶ Theodore Draper, *A Very Thin Line: The Iran-Contra Affairs* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 16.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Walker, *Revolution & Counterrevolution*, 326–327.

²¹⁹ David Ronfelt and Brian Michael Jenkins, *The Nicaraguan Resistance and U.S. Policy: Report on a May 1987 Conference* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1989), 15.

²²⁰ Walker, *Revolution & Counterrevolution*, 328.

²²¹ Ibid., 186.

Contra run radio station in San Jose, Costa Rica, known as Radio Impacta and Radio Católica. The Sandinistas did not have the capacity to stop the broadcast propaganda originating from outside Nicaragua; however they were effective inside their own borders. The FSLN government simply ignored radio stations broadcasting outside the country, but exerted their authority over the stations broadcasting inside Nicaragua.²²²

Supporting the Contras remained a priority for President Reagan. However, it had ultimately become unpopular with the U.S. Congress, which led to Congress passing the Boland Amendment in 1985, ending assistance to the Contras. This ultimately led to the Iran-Contra scandal in 1986 when the Reagan administration sought innovative funding outside of Congress to continue support for the Contras. Under the Presidency of George H. W. Bush, the Contras “ceased to be regarded as a viable military and political option.”²²³ However, the Bush administration supported their continuation as a force in the event that future Nicaraguan elections would not deliver the desired outcome for the United States.²²⁴

The deteriorating economic conditions in Nicaragua and the continual loss of life due to the war with the contras ended in 1990, when Violeta Chamorro was elected President of Nicaragua, defeating Daniel Ortega and the FSLN.²²⁵ The majority of Nicaraguans disliked the Contras. Accordingly, the Nicaraguans elected Chamorro because she promised to end the draft and to improve the economy within 100 days of being elected.²²⁶ The United States also lifted the economic sanctions against Nicaragua. Twelve years after the revolution began; the Sandinistas were no longer in control and the United States ultimately got what it wanted; democracy in Nicaragua, but it came at a great cost of life for the Nicaraguan people and the reputation of the United States.

²²² Walker, *Revolution & Counterrevolution*, 382.

²²³ Human Rights Watch, “NICARAGUA,” 1989, <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1989/WR89/Nicaragu.htm>.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Walker, *Revolution & Counterrevolution*, 363.

²²⁶ Thomas W. Walker, *Nicaragua: The First Five Years* (New York: Praeger, 1985), 43.

B. NICARAGUAN PERCEPTIONS OF THE UNITED STATES PRIOR TO THE COUP

In the United States, the idea of going to war in Central America was not a popular idea as a result of the Vietnam debacle.²²⁷ President Reagan was the driving force behind the United States' involvement in Nicaragua, but he needed to get the support of Congress and the American people. To do this, he had to inform and to gain support domestically for Nicaragua and implement a public affairs action plan "to educate and heighten the perception of the people regarding the situation in Central America and the dangers posed by the Marxist/Leninist government of Nicaragua."²²⁸

In Nicaragua, the FSLN had much sympathy and support from the rural citizens, the poor in the cities, students and workers. This support materialized when the FSLN began to focus on politics rather than being primarily a military organization.²²⁹ The middle and upper classes feared the Sandinistas would impose a Soviet-style state and economy, though the FSLN never did.²³⁰ The FSLN had significant support from grassroots groups that aided them in overthrowing Somoza.²³¹

C. NICARAGUAN PERCEPTIONS OF THE UNITED STATES AFTER THE COUP

In the United States, the State Department initially presented an image of the Contras as "Freedom Fighters," who were made up of peasantry, farmers, vendors and shopkeepers that opposed the Somoza regime whom supported democracy and opposed communism and revolution.²³² This was a noble image, but the reality was that the Contras were committing horrific attacks against civilians while being portrayed as freedom fighters.

²²⁷ Valenta and Durán, *Conflict in Nicaragua*, 44.

²²⁸ Walker, *Revolution & Counterrevolution*, 328.

²²⁹ "Sandinista National Liberation Front," The Contemporary History, February 2012, <http://historysome.blogspot.com/2012/02/sandinista-national-liberation-front.html>.

²³⁰ Walker, *Nicaragua*, 9.

²³¹ Ibid., 10.

²³² E. Bradford Burns, *At War in Nicaragua: The Reagan Doctrine and the Politics of Nostalgia* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 69.

The Contras failed to articulate their views on issues and it was considered by Edgar Chamorro, that “If the Contras ever took power, they would simply replace the communists with their law-and-order regime and no one would be better off...I am now concerned that the contra cause which I have given up two years of my life offers Nicaragua nothing but a return to the past.”²³³ This was an opinion of the Contras also shared by members of the U.S. Congress. Congressman Richard Gephardt stated: “They are not a credible democratic alternative to the Sandinistas.”²³⁴ In light of these concerns, the Contras were also linked to numerous illegal activities and corrupt practices that ranged from fraud to drug trafficking.

Ultimately, it was the unpopularity of the Contras in the United States that led to restrictions on supporting them. Between 1982 and 1983, the U.S. Congress passed a series of amendments that were collectively known as the Boland Amendment, named after Congressman Edward P. Boland.²³⁵ The Boland Amendment “explicitly prohibited funds from being spent by the United States government for the overthrow of the government of Nicaragua.”²³⁶ Ultimately, the amendment would lead to the Reagan administrations’ decision to secure alternate funding through the sale of weapons to the Iranians in the Iran-Contra affair.

The attitude toward the war and the United States after nine years was collected in a survey conducted in the Nicaraguan capitol city of Managua by *Envio Magazine* in June of 1988.²³⁷ The survey was taken in the final months of the Reagan administration and after the Iran-Contra affair.

In the survey, 47% of the respondents blamed the United States and/or the Contras for the troubles in Nicaragua; 16% blamed the FSLN; 8% blamed the governing party; 6% blamed it on a lack of democracy, and 2% blamed totalitarianism or

²³³ Burns, *At War in Nicaragua*, 70.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 70.

²³⁵ Prados, *Presidents’ Secret Wars*, 413.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

²³⁷ Marvin Ortega, “Sandinistas Surviving In a Percentage Game,” *Revista Envío*, no. 89 (1988), <http://www.envio.org.ni/articulo/3072>.

communism.²³⁸ When asked about the United States, 85% were opposed to the United States supporting the Contras while 9% were in support of it. Of those results, 90% of those opposed to the Contras were from the upper and middle classes and “young,” while those in support of the Contras were “older” and made up about 17%.²³⁹

The survey indicated that 62% with anti-Sandinista sentiments believed the United States’ policies were bad for Nicaragua and only 8% believed they were good for Nicaragua. The survey indicated that there was a desire for reconciliation with the Contras through the political process and a desire for the United States to cease support for the Contras.²⁴⁰ This is consistent with the voter outcome of 1990 that elected Violeta Chamorro as the President of Nicaragua.

In 1989, Hemisphere Initiatives conducted their own survey and found that the image of the Contras was 57% negative and only 10% positive. When they looked at who was responsible for the problems in Nicaragua, 47% blamed the United States and 39% blamed the FSLN.²⁴¹

The information gathered from the surveys indicate that the United States failed to achieve the perception necessary to vilify the FSLN and bolster support for the Contras. This was most likely due to Contra atrocities and human rights abuses, which countered messages urging support for the Contras and not the FSLN.²⁴² It is inconceivable that any population in any given political system would consciously give up the status quo for another that is more barbaric. The United States did not provide a credible message that was accompanied by the actions of the forces it trained and equipped to achieve its desired end state. Additionally, by not offering a message of reconciliation for the population and the Sandinistas, a significant number of people were already immune to the messaging.

²³⁸ Ortega, “Sandinistas Surviving.”

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Walker, *Revolution & Counterrevolution*, 56.

²⁴² Prados, *Presidents’ Secret Wars*, 404.

D. APPLICATION OF SMT TO NICARAGUA

1. Leadership

Sometimes leaders rise from tragedy; this is the case with Violeta Chamorro. She was the loyal wife and widow of one of the most important political figure, Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, the editor at the *La Prensa*. She was of the proper pedigree and had the family resource of the *La Prensa* to counter and confront the FSLN. Indirectly receiving support from the United States and the CIA, Chamorro never took direct orders from them. This allowed the United States to use an existing asset with credibility rather than try to create one that probably would have lacked credibility.

Violeta Chamorro was originally part of the junta that followed the Somoza government, but resigned because it went beyond just overthrowing the Somoza government. After leaving, she became a critic of the Sandinistas and attacked them in the media through the *La Prensa* and subsequently asked to become politically involved as the widow of Pedro Joaquin Chamorro.²⁴³

Violeta Chamorro presented herself as a “good traditional wife” and denied being a feminist. She presented herself as an exemplary mother of four children despite their internal differences on politics.²⁴⁴ *La Prensa* was used to frame Violeta as an exemplary mother and; if “Maternal love had triumphed over political divisions, and if it could work for Dona Violet’s immediate family, why not for the whole Nicaraguan family?”²⁴⁵ Violeta Chamorro used the imagery of family to undermine FSLN support by claiming that voting for the FSLN would continue “obligatory military service and the suffering of mothers.”²⁴⁶

Chamorro only wore white, a symbol of purity. Many believed that she did this to evoke images of the Virgin Mary, and in a country like Nicaragua that was predominantly Catholic, it was a powerful symbol. She also played to the martyr aspect

²⁴³ Karen Kampwirth, *Women and Guerrilla Movements: Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chiapas, Cuba* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2002), 69.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 70.

with the loss of her husband, just as Mary had lost son.²⁴⁷ These perceptions of Violeta Chamorro resonated with war weary Nicaraguans who just wanted the conflict to end; she was elected President of Nicaragua in 1990.

2. Ideological Packaging

President Reagan believed that Cuba was responsible for the conflict in El Salvador and that Cuba was using Nicaragua as the “conduit” to El Salvador.²⁴⁸ President Reagan authorized covert action, but the Cubans had to be at the center of any explanation used to justify covert action.²⁴⁹ Cuba invoked a familiar image of what Communist revolution looked like and was still recent in the American experience. The FSLN easily fit into the image associated with Communist revolutionaries.

In overthrowing the Somoza government, the actions of the FSLN were consistent with the narrative used by the Reagan administration. The FSLN was portrayed as puppets of the Soviet Union, racist, human rights violators, responsible for drug problems in the United States, and linked to worldwide terrorism.²⁵⁰ At the same time, the administration pushed the image of the Contras as freedom fighters; necessary to American interests in Nicaragua, and that they must be the recipients of American aid. These narratives were disseminated by print in *La Prensa* and also by radio broadcast. These portrayals of the Contras were often difficult to accept due to the atrocities that they were known to have committed.

3. Frames and Framing

The Reagan administration framed the Contra War through a “White Propaganda” program directed internally at the U.S. Congress to obtain fiscal and material support for the Contras. Without U.S. support, the Contras would not have been able to take action against the Sandinistas. Framing conducted inside Nicaragua by the CIA and the Contras was done through the use of print and broadcast. The Nicaraguan paper, *La Prensa*,

²⁴⁷ Kampwirth, *Women and Guerrilla Movements*, 71.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 397.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Burns, *At War in Nicaragua*, 70.

“contributed to the polarization of Nicaraguan politics,” as a voice of opposition to the Sandinista government while supporting the Contras.²⁵¹ Much of what *La Prensa* printed was broadcast on Radio Católica as well, but it added additional “pseudoreligious teachings that pitted Sandinistas against Christianity.”²⁵²

4. Resource Mobilization

The United States military positioned special operations forces in various Central American countries in a series of maneuvers intended to create a high degree of visibility in the region and signal the seriousness of the United States’ position against revolution in the region. The U.S. Army supported the military PSYOP effort in the region through military exercises to make the Sandinistas fear the possibility of an invasion by the United States.²⁵³

The CIA supported *La Prensa*, a paper owned and operated by the Chamorro family that was a symbol of opposition to the Sandinistas.²⁵⁴ The *La Prensa* newspaper published about 55,000 copies daily for a population of nearly 3 million and reached primarily the urban upper and the middle classes.²⁵⁵ *La Prensa* “contributed to the polarization of Nicaraguan politics”²⁵⁶ and was a voice of opposition to the Sandinista government and in support of the Contras. The publication was never taken seriously as an informative newspaper and was more of a tabloid than a legitimate newspaper; it was consistently irresponsible, sensational, poorly written and edited, and frequently inaccurate.²⁵⁷ The credibility of *La Prensa* was very low due to its blatant support for the United States and the Contras, and Nicaraguans called for a ““real” opposition newspaper, as it was obvious that *La Prensa* was externally manipulated and full of half-

²⁵¹ Walker, *Revolution & Counterrevolution*, 363.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 362.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 328.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 186.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 187.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 363.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 187.

truths.”²⁵⁸ However, the publication was able to capitalize on the fact that it was regularly censored and occasionally shut down by the Sandinista government. *La Prensa* was able to use the Sandinista reaction as part of their strategy. By writing and publishing stories that were critical of the FSLN, *La Prensa* knew they would be censored and that it would demonstrate that freedom of the press under the Sandinistas was a myth.²⁵⁹

The CIA supported *Radio Impacta*, a Contra-run radio station in San Jose, Costa Rica, and *Radio Católica*, a station in Nicaragua run by the Catholic Church whose narrative was also critical of the Sandinistas.²⁶⁰ The Voice of America radio program run by the United States Information Service also supported broadcast efforts to counter the Sandinistas government.²⁶¹

Radio Católica “carried frequent appeals that young men resist the draft,” and provided opposition groups with a “single point of access to a potentially broad-based popular following.”²⁶² *Radio Católica*, like *La Prensa*, was accused of receiving CIA funding by the Sandinistas, but the evidence was weak.²⁶³ According to Bob Woodward, the CIA was going to fund Archbishop Obando, but was instructed not to by U.S. Senator Moynihan who stated that the Archbishop was a “moral force down there, and under no conditions can he be compromised.”²⁶⁴ Regardless, aid was covertly provided, and later discovered to come from sources connected to Oliver North.

5. Opportunism and Adaptation

The CIA leveraged existing organizations inside Nicaragua such as the Catholic Church, which was an obvious choice since much of the Nicaraguan population identified itself as Catholic.²⁶⁵ In Nicaragua, the Church experienced a split in its ranks. The clergy

²⁵⁸ Walker, *Revolution & Counterrevolution*, 363.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 280.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 355.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 355.

²⁶² Ibid., 182.

²⁶³ Ibid., 363.

²⁶⁴ Woodward, *Veil*, 374–375.

²⁶⁵ Woodward, *Veil*, 362.

and nuns tended to side with the Sandinistas and were often referred to as the “popular Church,” whereas the upper strata of the Church, under the leadership of Archbishop Miguel Obando, tended to oppose the Sandinistas and the brutality of the FSLN, and utilized *Radio Católica* to speak out against the FSLN and Sandinistas.²⁶⁶ Much of what *Radio Católica* broadcast was repetitious of what *La Prensa* had printed.²⁶⁷

6. Presence, Tactics and Deeds

Militarily, the United States committed forces in neighboring countries for psychological effect, but it was the Contras that executed the actual military operations. Unfortunately, the actions of the Contras were more violent and destructive than those of the FSLN. Despite the propaganda exclaiming the Contras to be freedom fighters, they were not, and their own actions did more to hamper their effort than anything the FSLN did.

The publication *La Prensa* was also used by the CIA because of its established role in Nicaraguan media and for the recognized leadership of the publication—Violeta Chamorro. The Sandinistas often found themselves at odds with the *La Prensa* paper, which openly attacked the revolution and the government. The tactic used by *La Prensa* was to get itself censored by the government, thus proving that the FSLN was not permitting freedom of the press. This placed the Sandinistas in the difficult position of balancing censorship with reaction from the *La Prensa*. However, the FSLN leadership saw censorship as “a necessary evil.”²⁶⁸

The United States also used magazines and newspapers to place articles and opinion pieces to influence public opinion against the FSLN. The CIA and the Contras also used radio, specifically, *Radio Católica* inside Nicaragua; outside of the country they used *Radio Impacto* from Costa Rica. The FSLN understood the effectiveness of radio and dismantled all of the radio stations they could find inside the Nicaraguan borders.

²⁶⁶ Walker, *Revolution & Counterrevolution*, 17–18.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 362.

²⁶⁸ Walker, *Nicaragua*, 195.

However, they could not do anything about stations operating outside of Nicaragua and chose to ignore them.

E. TESTING OF THE HYPOTHESES

After applying the SMT factors to Guatemala, it can be determined that the United States certainly portrayed the FSLN as communists and achieved regime change in Guatemala. However, the final outcome was not what the United States had hoped for. The FSLN policies and political positions were easily aligned with communism and the Reagan administration did not have difficulty in associating Cuba with the events that were taking place in El Salvador, while at the same time, blaming Nicaragua for aiding Cuban action in the region. Given the history of the Communist revolution in Cuba, it was not difficult to conjure the necessary themes that resonated with Americans and echoed with Nicaraguans.

The United States was trying to keep Cuba from interfering in Central America and was concerned that Nicaragua was acting as a conduit for Cuba to operate in the region. As a result, Nicaragua became the focus of President Reagan who was trying to stem the spread of communism in the hemisphere. The United States made the decision to support the anti-communist Contra freedom fighters while portraying the Sandinistas as communists. When the FSLN received military weapons and support from the Soviet Bloc, the United States further used this act to justify actions. Even the middle and upper classes in Nicaragua feared the Sandinistas would impose a “Soviet-style state and economy.”²⁶⁹

Information-shaping operations were initiated ahead of major combat operations. The Contras were trained to operate radio stations and all operations were accompanied by information shaping operations. The CIA supported *La Prensa* newspaper, which was owned and operated by the Chamorro family and was a symbol of opposition to the Sandinistas.²⁷⁰ The messages printed in the *La Prensa* were often broadcast on *Radio Católica*, as well, but often included “pseudoreligious teachings that pitted Sandinistas

²⁶⁹ Walker, *Revolution & Counterrevolution*, 9.

²⁷⁰ Walker, *Revolution & Counterrevolution*, 186.

against Christianity.”²⁷¹ *Radio Católica* directly addressed the Catholic majority in Nicaragua and countered the “popular church” elements of the Catholic Church. This denied both the FSLN and the revolutionaries from monopolizing religion and solidifying their legitimacy.

At the beginning of the revolution, the Sandinista narrative was primarily directed at the United States. The strategy took advantage of the fact that the American people were uninterested in sending troops to Nicaragua because of memories of Vietnam. More importantly, no other Latin American country would support American action to remove another Latin American government.²⁷² Additionally, the Sandinistas incorporated three additional narratives to capitalize on their overall strategy.²⁷³ First, the Sandinistas used sympathetic clergymen and liberation theology to promote the revolution in partnership with religion; this was the “popular church.”²⁷⁴ Second, Nicaragua tried to portray the United States negatively for supporting the Contras; it was not difficult to show the atrocities committed by the Contra rebels. Third, the Sandinistas demonstrated “tokenism” by allowing the limited strategic appearance of freedoms that the Sandinistas did not wish to permit; these strategic tokenisms were primarily directed towards the middle and upper classes in an effort to allay their fears that the new government would adopt strict communist-like practices.²⁷⁵ The FSLN understood their own media and offered their own narrative to offset what CIA and the Contras presented.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 362.

²⁷² Valenta and Esperanza, *Conflict in Nicaragua*, 44.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 382.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 44.

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V. CONCLUSION

A. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, each case study is compared against each other to determine what elements of the social movement theory are the most vital to establishing a narrative leading to regime change. Next, those elements are applied to test the validity of the hypotheses and answer the research question presented in the first chapter. Finally, a way ahead is presented in the forms of recommendations and areas for further study.

B. LESSONS LEARNED

1. Leadership

The prospective leader of a rebellion must have the leadership capability to lead followers and must be perceived as a legitimate and credible opponent to the current regime. The leader, preferably with a history, must be a figure that symbolizes the struggle against the existing regime and one who offers an alternative that is worthy of supporting and fighting for. An existing leader that can be co-opted and will support the guidance and direction of the sponsor orchestrating the regime change if the interests of the sponsor and the rebel leader overlap. Conditions should be shaped to ensure a long-term, positive relationship between the rebels and the sponsor after the rebellion succeeds. This will help ensure that U.S. policy goals are ultimately achieved.

2. Ideology

To create a strong ideological packaging for regime change, all narratives and actions by the targeted regime should be attacked at every possible opportunity to maximize the perception that the unacceptable conditions within the country are the responsibility of the regime. Efforts should also focus on influence efforts abroad to highlight the unacceptable conditions within the targeted regime.

3. Framing

Framing for action against the regime should escalate from the diagnostic to the motivational. Presenting the narrative in this fashion gives the target audience a natural evolution of action necessary to accomplish the intended behavioral change or action, and ultimately creates the necessary perception. Framing should be presented through legitimate outlets such as the media and established organizations, such as the Catholic Church.

4. Resource Mobilization

Rebel forces require significant material and fiscal resources as well as training and facilities. Whenever possible, the rebel forces should use established and legitimate networks inside the country to facilitate movement of personnel and supplies. Sufficient support needs to exist domestically in the United States for action in a particular country before any efforts start in the targeted country. If support is not secured, the chances for success will be extremely low. Public support is not necessary for covert operations, however selected members of Congress must be briefed and must approve the covert action.

5. Opportunism and Adaptation

Leaders and planners of regime change must be flexible and always look for new opportunities and then act quickly on them to support the overall campaign. Using the regimes' own laws, bureaucracy, and narrative against itself in the public domain can be highly effective.

6. Presence, Tactics and Deeds

Presence, tactics, and deeds should be started early and selected specifically for the intended target audience. They must also be integrated and mutually supporting of each other for maximum effectiveness and must support the narrative of the rebel forces. If there is a disconnect between what the rebel forces say and what they actually do, credibility could be lost and the ability to gain support could weaken or fail altogether.

7. Other Factors

The United States needs to consider carefully the criteria it uses to intervene in the internal affairs of other countries to change a regime. In two of the cases, the reasons were economic: the welfare of a corporation and oil. In the third case, the reason was ideological. When the United States commits itself to action, it needs to ensure that its actions are consistent with its message and that its message is consistent with its values.

C. HYPOTHESES

The validity of the hypotheses were tested with the following results:

- **H1:** The ideology behind the anti-regime must be broadly accepted and perceived as legitimate.
- **Yes.** In the three cases, communist expansion was the reason why it was necessary for the United States to take action. All of the actions in each of the case studies were predicated on the notion that there was a threat, and that threat was defined as communism. Communism was an easily identifiable existential threat for the era of the case studies; today, Islamism could easily be used to replace communism as the ideological framework.
- **H2:** The ability to control perception is dependent on the ability to leverage existing grievances and exploit regime vulnerabilities.
- **Yes.** Each case study showed an element that had some form of grievance against the regime. The grievances in each of the case studies were co-opted by the United States to bolster its own narrative and influence perceptions.
- **H3:** Information-shaping operations should precede major combat operations against the regime.
- **Yes.** In all three cases, information-shaping operations were executed well in advance of combat operations.
- **H4:** IO should target respected host-nation communicators who are willing and capable of disseminating the themes.
- **Yes.** In each case, respected and reputable communicators were used to disseminate themes and narratives. In some instances, the communicators willingly cooperated with U.S. and rebels forces. In other instances, communicators were bribed to get them to cooperate. This can obviously generate its own problems.

- **H5:** The legitimacy of the enemy’s narrative must be undermined.
- **Yes.** In two of the cases: Iran and Guatemala, their narratives were quickly undermined and the U.S. narratives became dominant. In the case of Nicaragua, the FSLN had an established narrative and the means of dissemination that proved to be difficult to undermine. This was most likely because the United States failed to ensure its own actions supported its own narrative. Words were not synchronized with deeds.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Military Information Support Operations (MISO) units exploit the insights in the case studies for the shaping of perceptions of foreign target audiences since within the Department of Defense (DOD), MISO is the main tool for conducting influence operations. As a SOF element, MISO should not be limited to influence operations defined solely as attribution and delayed attribution. The non-attribution influence operations proved to be an effective means to conduct influence operations in special warfare. For example, in Iran, the CIA launched a completely covert psychological campaign against Mossadeq. As a result of their endeavor, the CIA controlled the Iranian people’s perception of their faltering government that led to the overthrow of Mossadeq.

E. FUTURE RESEARCH

The following topics are presented for consideration for additional research:

- Legal Authorities required for the U.S. DOD forces, particularly for MISO, to conduct activities to support regime change and other activities short of a “named” operation.
- Examination of current force structure and training of military forces responsible for conducting influence operations to identify strengths and weaknesses and capabilities and shortcomings.
- Applying the methodology of this thesis to other forms of special warfare outside of regime change. The case studies presented in this thesis all focused on regime change, which does not always have to be the desired outcome. For example, in the case of the CIA’s involvement in the Tibet-China conflict, the non-attribution influence operations conducted were designed to enhance Tibetan resistance against Chinese occupation, and not necessarily to overthrow the ruling regime.
- Examining the relationship between the CIA and the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and their roles and capabilities in promoting regime change. Specifically, looking at which organization is

best suited for influencing and shaping operations in support of U.S. national security and policy objectives.

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